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Editor's Note: The President was at Camp David, MD, on December 12, the closing date of this issue. Releases and announcements issued by the Office of the Press Secretary but not received in time for inclusion in this issue will be printed next week.

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Published every Monday by the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408, the *Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents* contains statements, messages, and other Presidential materials released by the White House during the preceding week.

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Executive Order 13319—Amendment to Executive Order 13183, Establishment of the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status

December 3, 2003

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered that Executive Order 13183 of December 23, 2000, as amended, is further amended as follows:

(1) Section 2 is amended by deleting the second and third sentences, and inserting in lieu thereof the following: "It shall be composed of designees of each member of the President's Cabinet and the Deputy Assistant to the President and Director for Intergovernmental Affairs. The Task Force shall be co-chaired by the Attorney General's designee and the Deputy Assistant to the President and Director for Intergovernmental Affairs."

(2) By deleting section 4, and inserting in lieu thereof the following: "***Sec. 4.*** *Report.* The Task Force shall report on its actions to the President as needed, but no less frequently than once every 2 years, on progress made in the determination of Puerto Rico's ultimate status."

George W. Bush

The White House,

December 3, 2003.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 5, 2003]

NOTE: This Executive order was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 5, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on December 8. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7742—National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, 2003

December 5, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

More than 60 years ago, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt told Americans that December 7, 1941, was "a date which will live in infamy." On that morning, America was attacked without warning and without provocation. More than 2,400 Americans died and 1,100 were wounded. Our country was changed forever. Following that attack, our citizens responded with the strength and resolve that characterizes America in times of adversity, and that same spirit and courage carried us to victory in World War II. On National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, we honor the lives lost in that attack and salute the veterans of World War II. We also pay tribute to all those now serving America to advance freedom around the world.

The USS ARIZONA Memorial in Honolulu, Hawaii, stands as a monument to that ship's 1,177 crew members who died as a result of the attack. Since the Memorial's dedication, more than 40 million visitors have honored the heroism of these brave sailors and marines. Laura and I had the opportunity to visit the Memorial in October of this year. It is a fitting tribute to the lives lost in defense of our freedom during the greatest global conflict in history.

America's liberty is sustained by the courage of the American people. Every generation of Americans has answered the call to protect the blessings of freedom and democracy. With the help of our friends and allies, the brave men and women of our Armed Forces are now engaged in a global war on terrorism. And as in the aftermath of the terrible attack on Pearl Harbor, our Nation will stay the course, and we will prevail.

The Congress, by Public Law 103–308, as amended, has designated December 7, 2003, as "National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day."

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim December 7, 2003, as National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. I encourage all Americans to observe this solemn occasion with appropriate ceremonies and activities. I urge all Federal agencies, interested organizations, groups, and individuals to fly the flag of the United States at half-staff this December 7 in honor of those who died as a result of their service at Pearl Harbor.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fifth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 9, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 10. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Memorandum on Transfer of Funds Appropriated to the President Under the Heading Operating Expenses of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and Delegation of the Functions of the President Under the Heading Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004

December 5, 2003

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget

Subject: Transfer of Funds Appropriated to the President under the heading Operating Expenses of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and Delegation of the Functions of the President under the heading Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004

By the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including section 632 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended (22 U.S.C. 2392), I hereby direct as follows:

1. The funds appropriated to the President under the heading Operating Expenses of the Coalition Provisional Authority in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004 (Public Law 108–106), or in any subsequent appropriation under this heading, are transferred to the Secretary of Defense, for an account designated Operating Expenses of the Coalition Provisional Authority, International Reconstruction and Other Assistance, Army.

2. The memorandum entitled, "Delegation of the Functions of the President under the heading Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund in the Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2003", dated May 6, 2003, is amended by inserting "or in any subsequent appropriation under this heading," after the phrase, "(Public Law 108–11),". It is further amended by deleting all references to "the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance" or "ORHA," and inserting in lieu thereof "the Coalition Provisional Authority" or "CPA," respectively.

The Secretary of Defense is authorized and directed to publish this memorandum in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this memorandum. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

December 6, 2003

Good morning. This week we received additional reports that America's economy is gaining strength.

In November, our Nation added 57,000 new jobs, and the unemployment rate fell to 5.9 percent. In the past 4 months, 328,000 Americans started work at new jobs.

In the third quarter of 2003, worker productivity rose at a 9.4 percent annual rate, the fastest pace since 1983. Rising productivity means rising wages, and productivity gains help companies keep prices low, which allows American families to stretch their paychecks further.

Other economic signs are positive. Surveys show manufacturing activity to be at its strongest level in 20 years. Automobile sales rose in November. Home construction continues to expand.

During this season, America's families are planning for the year ahead, and they have reason to be optimistic. The American economy continues on a solid path of recovery. With strong sales and improving profits, companies will continue to hire new workers in the coming year. And because of tax relief, all workers will get to keep more of what they earn, and small businesses will be able to create more jobs.

Since 2001, we have cut taxes for everyone who pays income taxes. We reduced the marriage penalty in our Tax Code. We raised the child credit to $1,000 per child, and we have reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains. This tax relief is critical because it keeps more money in the hands of workers and small-business owners and others who move this economy forward.

Here in Washington, our responsibility is to make sure this economy keeps its momentum, and I will not be satisfied until every person who wants to work can find a job. I have proposed a six-point plan to strengthen this recovery and bring prosperity to every corner of America. In the coming months, I will continue to work with Congress to achieve these important measures.

First, businesses are more likely to hire people if health care for workers is affordable. We need to allow small-business owners to join together in association health plans, giving them the purchasing power of large companies when they shop for health insurance. And we must reform the medical liability system so that health care dollars serve the interest of patients, not the interests of trial lawyers.

Second, we need broad legal reforms so frivolous lawsuits don't put good companies out of business and good people out of work. The Congress should start by enacting class action reform.

Third, we must reduce unnecessary Government regulation and redtape, so businesses can focus on consumers and customers, not on filing out paperwork.

Fourth, Congress should enact a national energy policy so that businesses and farms and homeowners can count on a reliable and affordable supply of energy and our Nation is less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

Fifth, my administration is pursuing free and fair trade agreements so that our products and services can reach new markets and new customers overseas.

Sixth, we should make all the tax relief we have passed permanent. The tax relief is scheduled to phase out in coming years if Congress does not take action. Tax relief set our economy on the right track, and permanent tax relief will keep it on the right track.

By moving forward on this agenda, we can build on the great progress our economy is making. With the confidence and hard work of the American people and with the right policies in Washington, there are even brighter days ahead for the American economy.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:58 a.m. on December 5 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 6. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 5 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at the Kennedy Center Honors Reception

December 7, 2003

Thank you all very much. Good evening, and welcome to the White House. Laura and I are pleased to have you all here, and we are so honored to be a part of this annual tradition. We especially welcome the 2003 Kennedy Center honorees and their family and their friends.

Every year, the Kennedy Center pays tribute to five outstanding artists. Each group of honorees is an interesting mix. [*Laughter*] This year, for example, we have a director whose best films are known to all. We have an actress who has created characters we all remember, who, I'm told, still does a mighty good Tarzan yell. [*Laughter*] And the three musicians with us are among the most recognized in the world. They're not known to have performed together—[*laughter*]—but the sight of all three on the same stage is a picture to remember.

The Kennedy Center Honors recognize great contributions to American culture. Each of the honorees is here because of their hard effort and superior performance through an entire career.

Only one honoree was born in Texas. [*Laughter*] That person is Carol Burnett, who spent her early years in San Antonio. Young Carol went off into the world, and the world took a liking to her from the start. She is today one of the most recognized and warmly regarded entertainers in America.

For her first performance in acting class at UCLA, the teacher gave Carol Burnett a "D-". [*Laughter*] But Carol found, as have I—[*laughter*]—that one bad grade or two—[*laughter*]—is not the end of the road. [*Laughter*]

By the end of her freshman year, she was named "Most Outstanding Newcomer." Within a few years, she became a star on Broadway and a television favorite on the Winchell-Mahoney Show and the Garry Moore Show. In the sixties and seventies, Carol's own variety show ran 11 years and received more than 20 Emmys. Every week, Carol performed one of the most difficult feats in all of show business, playing it straight with Tim Conway. [*Laughter*]

To this day, millions of Americans can instantly recall sketches and characters from the Carol Burnett Show. Whether she was playing Eunice or the Scrub Woman or Starlett O'Hara in "Went With The Wind"—[*laughter*]—viewers could always sense the person behind the character, the sweetness, the sincerity, and the wonderful spirit of Carol Burnett.

Through the years in such performances as "Same Time Next Year," Carol has also shown the depth and range of her talent. In her good life, she has been a beloved entertainer, a devoted mom, and a faithful friend. She is a cheerful and graceful presence in American life, and America honors Carol Burnett.

All great performances in front of a camera involve an artistic vision behind the camera, and few have spent more years at the top of the directing profession than Mike Nichols. His name on a production signifies quality, intelligence, and high artistic standards. His credits include some of the most memorable films of the last two generations. "The Graduate" was a hit movie and a triumph that has held up over time.

The best directors are always extending themselves, and Mike Nichols has turned his gifts to films as varied as "Catch-22," "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and "Working Girl."

He is equally respected for his career on Broadway, first as a performer, then as director of the original "Odd Couple" and "Barefoot in the Park." The medal Mike Nichols wears this evening is the latest in a collection of other well-deserved honors, including the Oscar, the Emmy, the Tony, and the Grammy.

A movie critic once said that Mike Nichols' greatest talent may be his ability to bring out the best in performers, and that is another reason why Mike Nichols is among the finest.

Mike has summed up his career this way: "I have been in love with movies all my life. Directing them is like getting to marry this girl you followed around for years and years." I don't know how long he followed around Diane Sawyer—[*laughter*]—but she is here to share in this very proud moment.

And Mike's parents, who brought their little boy to America from Nazi Germany,

would also be proud of their son. And tonight we are really proud to honor this fine man, Mike Nichols.

During this evening's reception, we will hear music from the Marine Band. I suspect that these fine musicians are thrilled to be in the presence of one of the greatest violinists of his age or any other.

As it happens, Laura and I were guests in this very room when Itzhak Perlman performed for President and Mrs. Reagan. That audience, like every audience to hear this man, was captivated by his music and charmed by his presence. According to a review of a recent concert in Minneapolis, "Perlman maintained an intimate rapport with the audience. For instance, he kept them updated on the score of the World Series between pieces." [*Laughter*] He was clearly having fun, and so was his audience.

The sound of a violin first called to him over the radio when he was just 3 years old. The Perlmans gave their boy a toy fiddle. He soon exhausted the possibilities of that instrument. Armed with a real violin, he was onstage with orchestras in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem and by the age 10 had given his first solo recital.

America first came to know him 3 years later, when in 1958 he played "Flight of the Bumblebee" on the Ed Sullivan show. From that day to this, Itzhak Perlman has had a unique hold on the respect and affection of all who love classical music.

He has played with every major orchestra in the world. He's collected more than a dozen Grammys, enthralled listeners with a repertoire stretching from baroque to contemporary, and touched millions of filmgoers with the pure and haunting solos in "Schindler's List."

Critics have written of Perlman's technical mastery, the rich tone and faultless intonation. And all who have seen him play are struck by the apparent ease with which he plays the most demanding of instruments. This good soul has been given a singular talent, and in sharing it he has brought much beauty into the world. For that, we are all honored to be in the presence of Maestro Itzhak Perlman.

Speaking of soul—[*laughter*]—James "Butane" Brown is in the house. Of course, he goes by other titles. Some men are too cool to only have one nickname. James Brown has been called "Mr. Dynamite," "Soul Brother Number One," and of course, "The Godfather of Soul." Many names fit him, but there's no one else like him. And in a career of more than 50 years, he has earned the reputation as a live performer with no equal and as an institution of rock and roll.

He grew up in Georgia, knowing many of the toils and struggles of an earlier time. He worked hard and took his own path. He received guidance along the way from many sources, from his Aunt Honey, who raised him, to the first preachers and gospel musicians he heard.

He joined a band that called itself "The Famous Flames." It took only a short while before the name was changed, by general agreement, to "James Brown and the Famous Flames." [*Laughter*] When you hear the title of a James Brown song, right away you can picture him singing it, "I Feel Good," "Please, Please, Please," "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag," "Living in America."

Since he first achieved fame in the 1950s, James has posted 98 entries on Billboard's Top 40 R&B Singles Chart, more than any other performer. Bonnie Raitt has described James Brown's place in music history this way, "You couldn't even list how many people have been influenced by him. In the Mount Rushmore of musical figures, he definitely would be on it."

Of course, on that Mount Rushmore of music, the sculptor would have to pay particular attention to the hair. [*Laughter*] James is the first to tell you that the look is important to his success. Here's what he says, "Hair is the first thing, and teeth are the second." [*Laughter*] "Hair and teeth, a man got these two things, he's got it all." [*Laughter*]

The truth is, James Brown was being awfully modest. Along with the look, this man is blessed with incredible talent, undeniable stage presence, and the discipline of a true professional. He's still on the road and living it up—living up to that other nickname, "the hardest working man in show business." Our congratulations to James Joe Brown, Junior.

We are delighted to welcome our final honoree to the White House. Loretta Lynn

even mentioned the White House in one of her songs. Since I don't have a band right here and since I can't sing—[*laughter*]—I'll just say the words, and you can imagine Loretta singing them, "The White House social season should be glittering and gay, but here in Topeka the rain is a-falling, the faucet is a-dripping, and the kids are a-bawling"—[*laughter*]—"one of them a-toddling, and one is a-crawling, and one's on the way." [*Laughter*]

Many of Loretta Lynn's songs are about the challenges, the dreams, and the joys of everyday life. She's known them all, and she has sung about them with style and feeling. More than four decades after she first sang at the Grand Ole Opry, there is no better known voice in country music and no lady more admired than Loretta Lynn.

Her song and the film "Coal Miner's Daughter" tell a true story that began in Butcher Hollow, Kentucky. Loretta grew up believing, in her words, that "from the Holler down to the mine was the whole world."

Her world changed when she met a soldier named Mooney Lynn. He made a strong impression on people. See, Mooney was the kind of man who wore a cowboy hat with a label inside that said, "Like hell it's yours." [*Laughter*] But as Loretta remembers, "I wasn't scared of Mooney. He was real nice. I was scared because I had never seen a car before." [*Laughter*] They married and moved away and were living in the State of Washington when Mooney got an idea. He knew that the voice singing lullabies to their children was better than any he had ever heard from a jukebox or in a saloon. And just maybe if Loretta cut a record, radio stations might play it.

That notion has been proven correct in more than 70 record albums, 27 number one singles, and 80 chart hits, from "Coal Miner's Daughter" to "Love is the Foundation" to "Don't Come Home A Drinkin' With Lovin' on Your Mind." [*Laughter*]

Loretta has received every top honor in country music and is loved for her own songs and for her wonderful duets with the late Conway Twitty. Her appeal has been explained this way, "She's straightforward, down home, innocent, and perfectly charming. Everyone loves her." And this evening, that unanimous opinion is expressed once again, and the Nation pays tribute to Loretta Lynn.

Americans are grateful to these Kennedy Center honorees because you have all given us wonderful memories. You have given your peers a high mark to aim for. Each of you in your own way has given America a body of work that reflects so very well on our Nation. Thank you for contributions to America. May God continue to bless you. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:05 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to musician Bonnie Raitt.

Presidential Determination on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia

December 6, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2004–10

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Presidential Determination on Waiver of Conditions on Obligation and Expenditure of Funds for Planning, Design, and Construction of a Chemical Weapons Destruction Facility in Russia

Consistent with the authority vested in me by section 1306 of the Department of Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2004 (Public Law 108–136) (the "Act"), I hereby certify that waiving the conditions described in section 1305 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 (Public Law 106–65) is important to the national security interests of the United States, and include herein, for submission to the Congress, the statement, justification, and plan described in section 1306 of the Act.

You are authorized and directed to transmit this determination, including the statement, justification, and plan to the Congress and to arrange for publication of this determination in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

NOTE: This memorandum was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 8.

Remarks on Signing the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003

December 8, 2003

Good morning. Thanks for the warm welcome. In a few moments I will have the honor of signing an historic act of Congress into law. I'm pleased that all of you are here to witness the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare.

With the Medicare Act of 2003, our Government is finally bringing prescription drug coverage to the seniors of America. With this law, we're giving older Americans better choices and more control over their health care, so they can receive the modern medical care they deserve. With this law, we are providing more access to comprehensive exams, disease screenings, and other preventative care, so that seniors across this land can live better and healthier lives. With this law, we are creating Health Savings Accounts. We do so so that all Americans can put money away for their health care tax-free.

Our Nation has the best health care system in the world, and we want our seniors to share in the benefits of that system. Our Nation has made a promise, a solemn promise to America's seniors. We have pledged to help our citizens find affordable medical care in the later years of life. Lyndon Johnson established that commitment by signing the Medicare Act of 1965. And today, by reforming and modernizing this vital program, we are honoring the commitments of Medicare to all our seniors.

The point man in my administration on this issue was Secretary Tommy Thompson, and he and his team did a fabulous job of working with the Congress to get this important piece of legislation passed. Tommy, I want to thank you for your leadership.

This bill passed the Congress because of the strong leadership of a handful of Members, starting with the Speaker of the House, Denny Hastert. Mr. Speaker was joined by Senator Bill Frist, the Senate majority leader of the Senate, in providing the leadership necessary to get this bill done. I want to thank you both.

I appreciate the hard work of the House majority leader, Tom DeLay, in seeing that this bill was passed. I also appreciate the hard work of the chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Chairman Bill Thomas, for his good work. The chairman of the Finance Committee in the Senate, Senator Chuck Grassley, did a noble job, and he was joined in this task by the ranking member of the Finance Committee, Senator Max Baucus of Montana.

And the entire Senate effort was boosted by the efforts of a man from Louisiana, Senator John Breaux. And speaking about Louisiana, Billy Tauzin of the House of Representatives did great work on this bill. Senator Orrin Hatch from Utah made a significant contribution. Nancy Johnson, the House Member from Connecticut, did a great job. Mike Bilirakis from Florida worked hard on this piece of legislation. I want to thank all the other Members of the Congress and the Senate who have joined us. Thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules to share in this historic moment.

I appreciate Tom Scully, the Administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, for his good work. The Director of the CDC, Julie Gerberding, is with us today. Julie, thank you for coming. The Food and Drug Administration Commissioner, Mark McClellan, is here. Jo Anne Barnhart, the Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, is with us. Thank you for coming, Jo Anne. Kay James, who is the Director of the Office of Personnel Management, is with us. Thank you for coming, Kay.

A lot of this happened—this bill happened because of grassroots work. A lot of our fellow citizens took it upon themselves to agitate for change, to lobby on behalf of what's right. We had some Governor support around the country. Governor Craig Benson from New Hampshire is with us today. Governor, thank you for coming.

But the groups that speak for the elderly did fantastic work on this legislation. See, there was a lot of pressure not to get something done—for the wrong reasons, I might add. But Bill Novelli, the CEO of AARP,

stood strong in representing the people he was supposed to represent and worked hard to get this legislation passed. And Bill, I want to thank you for your leadership. And you were joined by Jim Parkel, who is the president of the AARP. Jim, I want to thank you as well for doing what was right, for focusing on the needs of the seniors of our country.

Jim Martin, the president of 60 Plus Association, worked hard. Charlie Jarvis, the chairman and CEO of United Seniors Association, worked hard. Mike Maves, the executive vice president and CEO of the AMA, worked hard on this piece of legislation. Mary Martin, the chairman of the board of the Seniors Coalition, worked hard. The truth of the matter is, a lot of good people worked hard to get this important legislation done, and I thank you for your work.

Medicare is a great achievement of a compassionate Government, and it is a basic trust we honor. Medicare has spared millions of seniors from needless hardship. Each generation benefits from Medicare. Each generation has a duty to strengthen Medicare, and this generation is fulfilling our duty.

First and foremost, this new law will provide Medicare coverage for prescription drugs. Medicare was enacted to provide seniors with the latest in modern medicine. In 1965, that usually meant house calls or operations or long hospital stays. Today, modern medicine includes outpatient care, disease screenings, and prescription drugs. Medicine has changed, but Medicare has not—until today.

Medicare today will pay for extended hospital stays for ulcer surgery; that's at a cost of about $28,000 per patient. Yet Medicare will not pay for the drugs that eliminate the cause of most ulcers, drugs that cost about $500 a year. It's a good thing that Medicare pays when seniors get sick. Now, you see, we're taking this a step further: Medicare will pay for the prescription drugs so that fewer seniors will get sick in the first place.

Drug coverage under Medicare will allow seniors to replace more expensive surgeries and hospitalizations with less expensive prescription medicine. And even more important, drug coverage under Medicare will save our seniors from a lot of worry. Some older Americans spend much of their Social Security checks just on their medications. Some cut down on the dosage to make a bottle of pills last longer. Elderly Americans should not have to live with those kinds of fears and hard choices. This new law will ease the burden on seniors and will give them the extra help they need.

Seniors will start seeing help quickly. During the transition to the full prescription benefit, seniors will receive a drug discount card. This Medicare-approved card will deliver savings of 10 to 25 percent off the retail price of most medicines. Low-income seniors will receive the same savings plus a $600 credit on their cards to help them pay for the medications they need.

In about 2 years, full prescription coverage under Medicare will begin. In return for a monthly premium of about $35, most seniors without any prescription drug coverage can now expect to see their current drug bills cut roughly in half. This new law will provide 95-percent coverage for out-of-pocket drug spending that exceeds $3,600 a year. For the first time, we're giving seniors peace of mind that they will not have to face unlimited expenses for their medicine.

The new law offers special help to one-third of older Americans with low incomes, such as a senior couple with low savings and an annual income of about $18,000 or less. These seniors will pay little or no premium for full drug coverage. Their deductible will be no higher than $50 per year, and their copayment on each prescription will be as little as $1. Seniors in the greatest need will have the greatest help under the modernized Medicare system.

I visited with seniors around the country and heard many of their stories. I'm proud that this legislation will give them practical and much-needed help. Mary Jane Jones from Midlothian, Virginia, has a modest income. Her drug bills total nearly $500 a month. Things got so tight for a while she had to use needles twice or 3 times for her insulin shots. With this law, Mary Jane won't have to go to such extremes. In exchange for a monthly premium of about $35, Mary Jane Jones would save nearly $2,700 in annual prescription drug spending.

Hugh Iverson from West Des Moines, Iowa, just got his Medicare membership.

And that's a good thing, because he hasn't had health insurance for more than 3 years. His drug bills total at least $400 a month. Within 2 years, with the $35-a-month coverage, he will be able to cut those bills nearly in half, saving him about $2,400 a year.

Neil LaGrow from Culpeper, Virginia, takes 15 medications, costing him at least $700 a month. To afford all those medications, Neil has to stay working. And thanks to this law, once he is enrolled in the drug benefit, he will be able to cut back his work hours and enjoy his retirement more because he'll have coverage that saves him about $4,700 a year.

I promised these seniors when I met with them that we would work hard to give them the help they need. They are all here today. So I am happy to report to them in person: Mary Jane, Hugh, and Neil, we are keeping our promise.

In addition to providing coverage for prescription drugs, this legislation achieves a second great goal. We're giving our seniors more health care choices, so they can get the coverage and care that meets their needs. Every senior needs to know, if you don't want to change your current coverage, you don't have to change. You're the one in charge. If you want to keep your Medicare the way it is, along with the new prescription benefit, that is your right. If you want to improve benefits, maybe dental coverage or eyeglass coverage or managed care plans that reduce out-of-pocket costs, you'll be free to make those choices as well.

And when seniors have the ability to make choices, health care plans within Medicare will have to compete for their business by offering higher quality service. For the seniors of America, more choices and more control will mean better health care. These are the kinds of health care options we give to the Members of Congress and Federal employees. They have the ability to pick plans to—that are right for their own needs. What's good for Members of Congress is also good for seniors. Our seniors are fully capable of making health care choices, and this bill allows them to do just that.

A third purpose achieved by this legislation is smarter medicine within the Medicare system. For years, our seniors have been denied Medicare coverage—have been denied Medicare coverage for a basic physical exam. Beginning in 2005, all newly enrolled Medicare beneficiaries will be covered for a complete physical.

The Medicare system will now help seniors and their doctors diagnose health problems early, so they can treat them early and our seniors can have a better quality life. For example, starting next year, all people on Medicare will be covered for blood tests that can diagnose heart diseases. Those at high risk for diabetes will be covered for blood sugar screening tests. Modern health care is not complete without prevention, so we are expanding preventive services under Medicare.

Fourth, the new law will help all Americans pay for out-of-pocket health costs. This legislation will create health savings accounts, effective January 1, 2004, so Americans can set aside up to $4,500 every year, tax-free, to save for medical expenses. Depending on your tax bracket, that means you'll save between 10 to 35 percent on any costs covered by money in your account. Our laws encourage people to plan for retirement and to save for education. Now the law will make it easier for Americans to save for their future health care as well.

A health savings account is a good deal, and all Americans should consider it. Every year, the money not spent would stay in the account and gain interest tax-free, just like an IRA. And people will have an incentive to live more healthy lifestyles because they want to see their health savings account grow. These accounts will be good for small-business owners and employees. More businesses can focus on covering workers for major medical problems such as hospitalization for an injury or illness. And at the same time, employees and their families will use these accounts to cover doctors visits or lab tests or other smaller costs. Some employers will contribute to employee health accounts. This will help more American families get the health care they need at the price they can afford.

The legislation I'm about to sign will set in motion a series of improvements in the care available to all America's senior citizens. And as we begin, it is important for seniors

and those approaching retirement to understand their new benefits. This coming spring, seniors will receive a letter to explain the drug discount card. In June, these cards, including the $600 annual drug credit for low-income seniors, will be activated. This drug card can be used through the end of 2005. In the fall of that year, seniors will receive an information booklet giving simple guidance on changes in the program and the new choices they will have. Then in January of 2006, seniors will have their new coverage, including permanent coverage for prescription drugs.

These reforms are the act of a vibrant and compassionate Government. We show our concern for the dignity of our seniors by giving them quality health care. We show our respect for seniors by giving them more choices and more control over their decision-making. We're putting individuals in charge of their health care decisions. And as we move to modernize and reform other programs of this Government, we will always trust individuals and their decisions and put personal choice at the heart of our efforts.

The challenges facing seniors on Medicare were apparent for many years, and those years passed with much debate and a lot of politics and little reform to show for it. And that changed with the 108th Congress. This year we met our challenge with focus and perseverance. We confronted problems, instead of passing them along to future administrations and future Congresses. We overcame old partisan differences. We kept our promise and found a way to get the job done. This legislation is the achievement of Members in both political parties. And this legislation is a victory for all of America's seniors.

Now I'm honored and pleased to sign this historic piece of legislation, the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:10 a.m. at DAR Constitution Hall. H.R. 1, approved December 8, was assigned Public Law No. 108–173. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003

December 8, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 1, the "Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003." The Act helps achieve a more modern Medicare system that includes prescription drug coverage and choices for seniors.

Sections 1012 and 1014 of the Act create a commission and a working group, both with most of their members designated by Members of Congress or the Comptroller General, a legislative agent. Sections 1012(h)(3) and 1014(j)(3) purport to give the commission and the working group a right to secure directly from executive departments and agencies information they seek to perform their duties. The executive branch shall construe these provisions in a manner consistent with the constitutional authorities of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch and to withhold information the disclosure of which could impair the deliberative processes of the Executive or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties.

Section 802 of the Act calls for the President to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation in the event that a Medicare funding warning is issued under section 801(a)(2). Many other provisions in the Act, including sections 101(b), 109(d)(2), 410A(e), 434(f), 507(c)(3), 645(a)(2), 649(g), 651(d)(2), 911(f), and 1014(o), also call for executive branch officials to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation. The executive branch shall construe these provisions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 8, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 1, approved December 8, was assigned Public Law No. 108–173.

Statement on the Death of Joe Skeen

December 8, 2003

Joe Skeen was a dedicated public servant who worked tirelessly for the people of New Mexico. He led an extraordinary life, from his service in the Navy and the Air Force Reserves to his work and many contributions in the New Mexico State Senate and the United States House of Representatives. He was a strong leader of conviction and principle. A good man, he will be missed by his many friends. Laura and I send our condolences to his wife, Mary, and their family and friends.

Memorandum on Determination Consistent With Section 620(q) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as Amended, and Section 512 of the FY 2002 and 2003 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Acts

December 8, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2004–11

Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of Defense, the Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Subject: Determination Consistent with Section 620(q) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, and Section 512 of the FY 2002 and 2003 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Acts

Consistent with the authority vested in me by section 620(q) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended, (22 U.S.C. 2370) and section 512 of the FY 2002 and 2003 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Acts, (Public Law 107–115 and Public Law 108–7), I hereby determine that the furnishing of assistance to Liberia is in the national interest of the United States and waive, with respect to that country, the application of section 620(q) of the Foreign Assistance Act and section 512 of the FY 2002 and 2003 Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Acts.

The Secretary of State is authorized and directed to report this determination to the Congress and to arrange for its publication in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Message to the Congress Transmitting a Report of the Railroad Retirement Board

December 8, 2003

To the Congress of the United States:

I transmit herewith the Annual Report of the Railroad Retirement Board presented for forwarding to you for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2002, consistent with the provisions of section 7(b)(6) of the Railroad Retirement Act and section 12(1) of the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 8, 2003.

Proclamation 7743—National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, 2003

December 8, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Last year, more than 17,000 people were killed and 258,000 more were injured in alcohol-related crashes. Such accidents cause unnecessary suffering, loss of life, and expense. During National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month, we continue our efforts to stop impaired driving and improve the safety of our roads during the holiday season and throughout the year.

We are enhancing both the education of our citizens about the dangers of driving while under the influence and our methods for keeping impaired drivers off the road. My Administration is helping in this fight by supporting the enforcement of traffic programs

that teach Americans about the risks of impaired driving. Earlier this year, my Administration proposed to the Congress the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003 (SAFETEA), which would elevate safe transportation to a national priority and increase State resources for existing enforcement and education efforts. While Federal help and funding are important, State and local involvement is also critical. As part of the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's "You Drink & Drive. You Lose." national campaign, from December 19, 2003, through January 4, 2004, more than 10,000 law enforcement agencies will join forces with community, health, government, and business organizations to demonstrate that impaired driving is unacceptable and unlawful.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 2003 as National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month. I encourage all Americans to join the "You Drink & Drive. You Lose." national campaign to protect our citizens from impaired drivers.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 10, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 9, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on December 11.

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Premier Wen Jiabao of China

December 9, 2003

Mr. Premier, members of the delegation, it is my honor to welcome you to the White House. Your visit reflects the increasing ties of cooperation and commerce between our two nations.

America and China share many common interests. We are working together in the war on terror. We are fighting to defeat a ruthless enemy of order and civilization. We are partners in diplomacy working to meet the dangers of the 21st century. We are full members of a world trading system that rewards enterprise and lifts nations.

Our two nations seek a Korean Peninsula that is stable and at peace. The elimination of North Korea's nuclear programs is essential to this outcome. Realizing this vision will require the strong cooperation of all North Korea's neighbors. I am grateful for China's leadership in hosting the six-party talks which are bringing us closer to a peaceful resolution of this issue. And my Government will continue to work with China as it plays a constructive role in Asia and in the world.

The rapid rise of China's economy is one of the great achievements of our time. China's increasing prosperity has brought great benefits to the Chinese people and to China's trading partners around the world. We recognize that if prosperity's power is to reach in every corner of China, the Chinese Government must fully integrate into the rules and norms of the international trading and finance system.

China has discovered that economic freedom leads to national wealth. The growth of economic freedom in China provides reason to hope that social, political, and religious freedoms will grow there as well. In the long run, these freedoms are indivisible and essential to national greatness and national dignity.

As our two nations work constructively across areas of common interest, we are candid about our disagreements. The growing strength and maturity of our relationship allows us to discuss our differences, whether over economic issues, Taiwan, Tibet, or human rights and religious freedom, in a spirit of mutual understanding and respect.

China is a great civilization, a great power, and a great nation. Premier Wen, when my country looks forward to—my country looks forward to working with you as China increasingly takes its place among the leading nations of the world.

The United States and China have made great progress in building a relationship that can address the challenges of our time, encourage global prosperity, and advance the cause of peace. It is my hope that your visit will further that progress.

Welcome, and thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10 a.m. at the South Portico at the White House, where Premier Wen was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Premier Wen.

Remarks Following Discussions With Premier Wen Jiabao of China and an Exchange With Reporters

December 9, 2003

President Bush. Welcome. I will make a statement; the Premier will make a statement. We'll answer questions, one from the American side, one from the Chinese side, one from the American side, and one from the Chinese side.

Mr. Premier, welcome. We're going to have extensive discussions today on a lot of issues. We've just had a very friendly and candid discussion. There's no question in my mind that when China and the United States works closely together, we can accomplish a lot of very important objectives. Our relationship is good and strong, and we are determined to keep it that way for the good of our respective peoples and for the sake of peace and prosperity in the world.

So, welcome. Glad you're here.

Premier Wen. I'm very grateful towards President Bush and the U.S. Government for the kind invitation and warm hospitality.

Just now, President Bush and I had an in-depth exchange of views on China-U.S. relationship and on international and regional issues of mutual interest. The discussion took place under very friendly, candid, cooperative, and constructive atmosphere, and we reached consensus on many issues.

President Bush and I both believe that the further improvement and growth of the bilateral ties between China and the U.S. will not only bring benefits for the people of the two countries but also in the interest of world peace and stability.

Thank you.

President Bush. AP man.

Taiwan

Q. Mr. President, George Gedda of AP. Given the sensitivity of the issue, do you believe the referendum planned by the Taiwanese on March 20th should be cancelled?

President Bush. Someone needs to interpret that.

Let me tell you what I've just told the Premier on this issue. The United States Government's policy is "one China," based upon the three communiques and the Taiwan Relations Act. We oppose any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo. And the comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally to change the status quo, which we oppose.

Why don't you call on somebody from your press.

Q. Premier Wen, what is the position of the Chinese Government on the question of Taiwan?

Premier Wen. Our fundamental policy on the settlement of the question of Taiwan is peaceful reunification and one country, two systems. We would do our utmost with utmost sincerity to bring about national unity and peaceful reunification through peaceful means.

The Chinese Government respects the desire of people in Taiwan for democracy, but we must point out that the attempts of Taiwan authorities, headed by Chen Shui-bian, are only using democracy as an excuse and attempt to resort to defensive referendum to split Taiwan away from China. Such separatist activities are what the Chinese side can absolutely not accept and tolerate.

We also want to say that so long as there is a glimmer of hope, we would not give up our efforts for peaceful reunification. We have expressed our will and determination to uphold national unity. This is for the very purpose of maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits. And such stability can

only be maintained through unswerving opposition and firm opposition to pro-independence activities.

On many occasions and just now in the meeting as well, President Bush has reiterated the U.S. commitment to the three Sino-U.S. Joint Communiques, the "one China" principle, and opposition to Taiwan independence. We appreciate that. In particular, we very much appreciate the position adopted by President Bush toward the latest moves and developments in Taiwan, that is, the attempt to resort to referendum of various kinds as excuse to pursue Taiwan independence. We appreciate the position of the U.S. Government.

President Bush. Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, thank you. North Korea is saying they will freeze their nuclear program if the U.S. takes them off the terrorism list and provides fuel aid. Is this a worthwhile idea? And how are you going to get the six-party talks going again?

President Bush. Yes, well, we spent a lot of time talking about North Korea here. We share a mutual goal, and that is for the Korean Peninsula to be nuclear-weapons-free. I thank the Premier for China starting the six-party talks, and I will continue those talks. I think they're very important.

The goal of the United States is not for a freeze of the nuclear program. The goal is to dismantle a nuclear weapons program in a verifiable and irreversible way, and that is a clear message that we are sending to the North Koreans. And we will continue to work with China and the other countries involved to resolve this issue peacefully.

China-U.S. Relations

Q. Premier Wen, what's your reading of the status quo and the future development of China's economic relationship and trade with the United States?

Premier Wen. The expansion of China's economic cooperation and trade with the United States, as we see today, has not come by easily. Just imagine, 25 years ago, our trade was less than 2.5 billion U.S. dollars, and now the volume has exceeded 100 billion U.S. dollars. Our economic and trade links have been conducive to the interest of our two people and two countries.

We have to admit, though, in our economic and trade relationship, problems do exist, and mainly, the U.S. trade deficit with China. The Chinese Government takes this problem seriously and has taken measures to improve the situation. Soon, in a few minutes, we will have a large group meeting with the U.S. side, and in that setting, I would make one proposal, and I will also share with President Bush five principles we think that should guide the development of economic cooperation and trade between China and the U.S.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan. Premier Wen spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Resignation of Mel R. Martinez as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

December 9, 2003

Mel Martinez is a good friend and an exceptional public servant. As a refugee from Cuba, Mel came to America in search of freedom and opportunity as one of the many young children sent by their parents as part of a Catholic relief program known as Pedro Pan. As Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, he has worked tirelessly to help every American realize the promise of our country for themselves and their families. I appreciate the energy, optimism, and compassion he brought to my administration. I thank him for serving our Nation so selflessly, and Laura and I wish Mel, his wife, Kitty, and their family well.

Statement on the Resignation of John Bridgeland as Assistant to the President and Director of the USA Freedom Corps

December 9, 2003

John Bridgeland has been a valuable advisor to me for nearly 4 years. He started on the policy staff of my Presidential campaign in early 2000. Since January 20, 2001, he has faithfully served in my administration, first as Deputy Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy and Director of the Domestic Policy Council and then as Assistant to the President and the first Director of the USA Freedom Corps Office. He has worked tirelessly to strengthen a culture of service in America and to ensure that we all love our neighbors as we want to be loved ourselves. His work has had a positive and vitally important impact on government, nonprofit and community service organizations, businesses, and many men, women, and children who need a helping hand. I appreciate and thank John for his friendship and wise counsel. This good man has touched many people through his dedicated public service, and I wish him, Maureen, and their three children all the best.

Executive Order 13320—Closing of Executive Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government on Friday, December 26, 2003

December 9, 2003

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. All executive branch departments and agencies of the Federal Government shall be closed and their employees excused from duty on Friday, December 26, 2003, the day after Christmas Day, except as provided in section 2 below.

Sec. 2. The heads of executive branch departments and agencies may determine that certain offices and installations of their organizations, or parts thereof, must remain open and that certain employees must report for duty on December 26, 2003, for reasons of national security or defense or other public need.

Sec. 3. Friday, December 26, 2003, shall be considered as falling within the scope of Executive Order 11582 of February 11, 1971, and of 5 U.S.C. 5546 and 6103(b) and other similar statutes insofar as they relate to the pay and leave of employees of the United States.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 9, 2003.

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 11, 2003]

NOTE: This Executive order was published in the *Federal Register* on December 12.

Memorandum on Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act

December 9, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2004–12

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Suspension of Limitations Under the Jerusalem Embassy Act

Consistent with the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, including section 7(a) of the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 (Public Law 104–45) (the "Act"), I hereby determine that it is necessary to protect the national security interests of the United States to suspend for a period of 6 months the limitations set forth in sections 3(b) and 7(b) of the Act. My Administration remains committed to beginning the process of moving our embassy to Jerusalem.

You are hereby authorized and directed to transmit this determination to the Congress, accompanied by a report in accordance with section 7(a) of the Act, and to publish the determination in the *Federal Register*.

This suspension shall take effect after transmission of this determination and report to the Congress.

George W. Bush

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Romania-United States Additional Protocol Concerning the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment

December 9, 2003

To the Senate of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification, I transmit herewith the Additional Protocol between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Romania Concerning the Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investment of May 28, 1992, signed at Brussels on September 22, 2003. I transmit also, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to this Additional Protocol.

My Administration expects to forward to the Senate shortly analogous Additional Protocols for Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. Each of these Additional Protocols is the result of an understanding the United States reached with the European Commission and six countries that will join the European Union (EU) on May 1, 2004 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and the Slovak Republic), as well as with Bulgaria and Romania, which are expected to join the EU in 2007.

The understanding is designed to preserve U.S. bilateral investment treaties (BITs) with each of these countries after their accession to the EU by establishing a framework acceptable to the European Commission for avoiding or remedying present and possible future incompatibilities between their BIT obligations and their future obligations of EU membership. It expresses the U.S. intent to amend the U.S. BITs, including the BIT with Romania, in order to eliminate incompatibilities between certain BIT obligations and EU law. It also establishes a framework for addressing any future incompatibilities that may arise as European Union authority in the area of investment expands in the future, and endorses the principle of protecting existing U.S. investments from any future EU measures that may restrict foreign investment in the EU.

The United States has long championed the benefits of an open investment climate, both at home and abroad. It is the policy of the United States to welcome market-driven foreign investment and to permit capital to flow freely to seek its highest return. This Additional Protocol preserves the U.S. BIT with Romania, with which the United States has an expanding relationship, and the protections it affords U.S. investors even after Romania joins the EU. Without it, the European Commission would likely require Romania to terminate its U.S. BIT upon accession because of existing and possible future incompatibilities between our current BIT and EU law.

I recommend that the Senate consider this Additional Protocol as soon as possible, and give its advice and consent to ratification at an early date.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 9, 2003.

Message to the Senate Transmitting the Japan-United States Convention on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion With Respect to Taxes on Income

December 9, 2003

To the Senate of the United States:

I transmit herewith, for Senate advice and consent to ratification, the Convention between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Japan for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income, signed at Washington on November 6, 2003, together with a Protocol and an exchange of notes (the "Convention"). I also transmit, for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State concerning the Convention.

This Convention would replace the Convention between the United States of America and Japan for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income, signed at Tokyo on March 8, 1971.

This Convention, which is similar to tax treaties between the United States and other developed nations, provides rules specifying the circumstances under which income that arises in one of the countries and is derived by residents of the other country may be taxed by the country in which income arises, providing for maximum source-country withholding tax rates that may be applied to various types of income and providing for protection from double taxation of income. The proposed Convention also provides rules designed to ensure that the benefits of the Convention are not available to persons that are engaged in treaty shopping. Also included in the proposed Convention are rules necessary for administering the Convention.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Convention, and that the Senate give its advice and consent to the ratification of the Convention.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 9, 2003.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Members of the Iraqi National Symphony

December 10, 2003

Last night Laura and I had the honor of going to hear the Iraqi National Symphony play with the Washington Symphony at the Kennedy Center. It was an extraordinary event. And today I've had the honor of welcoming members of the symphony here at the White House. Maestro, you did a superb job. Thank you very much.

I'm also honored to be here with Rend al-Rahim, who is the Iraqi representative to the United States. Rend is an articulate defender of freedom and peace. I'm so honored you're here, Rend, and we look forward to working with you.

We've had a very positive discussion here about freedom and hopes and aspirations of young and old alike. And I am so impressed by the spirit of these musicians. I'm so honored you would come to our country.

It's very interesting that the Iraqi Symphony is made up of people who are Shi'a and Sunni and Armenian and Kurdish. They work for one thing, and that is a unified sound, a beautiful sound. And that's the country that is now emerging in Iraq, a country that will work together and recognize everybody's rights. We're making good progress in Iraq. There's more to do, obviously, but the fact that the Iraqi Symphony is here and entertaining Americans is a sign of that progress.

And we thank you all for coming. We wish you Godspeed.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:01 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mohammed Amin Ezzat, conductor, Iraqi National Symphony; and Rend Rahim Francke, head of Iraq's Interest Section in the U.S. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Paul Simon

December 10, 2003

Laura and I were saddened to learn of the death of former Senator Paul Simon. Paul Simon contributed significantly to America as an Army special agent, newspaper publisher, Member of the United States Senate and House of Representatives, and author and teacher. He will be missed by the many people in Illinois and throughout the country whose lives he touched and improved. Laura and I send our condolences to his family and many friends.

Statement on the Death of Bob Bartley

December 10, 2003

Bob Bartley was a giant of journalism. His extraordinary contributions to America as an author, editor, and columnist helped shape our times. I was pleased to award him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, our highest civil honor, in recognition of his enormous impact on the intellectual and political life of our Nation. Laura joins me in sending condolences to Edith and his daughters, family, colleagues, and friends.

Proclamation 7744—Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, 2003

December 10, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

America's founders dedicated this country to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. During Human Rights Day, Bill of Rights Day, and Human Rights Week, we recognize the advances we have made expanding freedom, democracy, and individual rights in this country and around the world.

America has helped bring liberty to Afghanistan and Iraq. In countries like Belarus, Cuba, and Zimbabwe, we continue to stand with those who struggle for democracy. We will continue to call on Burma's ruling junta to release political prisoners and engage in an inclusive dialogue with the democratic opposition to bring democracy to Burma. We also look forward to the day when the men and women of North Korea can live in a free society.

Freedom is the right of mankind and the future of every nation. It is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 10, 2003, as Human Rights Day; December 15, 2003, as Bill of Rights Day; and the week beginning December 10, 2003, as Human Rights Week. I call upon the people of the United States to mark these observances with appropriate ceremonies and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this tenth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:44 a.m., December 12, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 15.

Remarks Following a Cabinet Meeting and an Exchange With Reporters

December 11, 2003

The President. I want to thank the members of my Cabinet for coming for what will be the last Cabinet meeting of the year 2003. I've just heard from each Cabinet member about the accomplishments in the year 2003. This has been an historic year. America is safer. America is more prosperous. America is a better place because of the actions this administration has taken.

In order to secure America, we liberated the people of Iraq from a brutal tyrant, and now we're in the process of rebuilding that country, along with others, and we're making good progress.

In order to make sure people could find work in America, we proposed and Congress passed an economic stimulus package, and that package is making a significant difference on our economy. Our economy is strong; it is vibrant. People are finding work, but we won't rest until everybody who wants to find a job can find one.

The country is better off for a lot of reasons. A significant piece of legislation was passed by the Congress, which I recently signed, and that is the Medicare reform bill. We took on a tough issue; we worked with Congress to make sure that we fulfilled a promise to America's seniors by modernizing and strengthening Medicare.

This has been a year of accomplishment. We also recognize we've got a job to do, to continue to do for the American people, to keep this country safe and prosperous and strong and a better place for all our citizens. And we look forward to working with the Congress in the year '04 to accomplish those objectives.

Today is Mel Martinez's, the fine Secretary of HUD, last meeting. Mel has served our country with class and distinction. I'm proud, Mel, to have had you on this team. Good job.

Secretary Martinez. Thank you, sir.

The President. I'll answer a couple of questions—that would be two questions. Terry [Terence Hunt, Associated Press].

Iraqi Reconstruction Contracts

Q. Mr. President, what did the leaders of France, Russia, and Germany say to you yesterday about being excluded from contracts, reconstruction contracts in Iraq? And can those countries be considered for the contract if they forgive debt that's owed by Iraq?

The President. Let me make sure everybody understands that men and women from our country, who proudly wear our uniform, risked their life to free Iraq. Men and women from other countries in a broad coalition risked their lives to free Iraq. And the expenditure of U.S. dollars will reflect the fact that U.S. troops and other troops risked their life.

Now, we want to work with all countries. We have a common goal, and that is to see that Iraq is free and peaceful. It is in every nation's interest that Iraq be free and peaceful, and we welcome contributions. We welcome people's willingness to participate in this difficult yet important job of rebuilding Iraq.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. Sir, Chancellor Schroeder says international law must apply in this case. What's your understanding of the law?

The President. International law? I better call my lawyer. He didn't bring that up to me. I asked President Chirac and Chancellor Schroeder and President Putin to see Jim Baker to talk about debt restructuring. If these countries want to participate in helping the world become more secure by enabling Iraq to emerge as a free and peaceful country, one way to contribute is through debt restructuring. And so Jim Baker, with the consent of the Secretary of State, is going to go over and talk to these leaders about that. But I don't know what you're talking about, about international law. I've got to consult my lawyer.

Iraqi Debt Relief

Q. Can I clarify one thing?

The President. Yes, you may clarify something.

Q. Thank you very much.

The President. Depends on what it is, though. [*Laughter*]

Q. Same issue.

The President. Okay.

Q. You seem to be saying that the boots on the ground are the only qualifications for—but what about the forgiveness of debt? Isn't that a fairly substantial——

The President. It is. It would be a significant contribution for which we would be very grateful. What I'm saying is, in the expenditure of taxpayers' money—and that's what we're talking about now—the U.S. people, the taxpayers, understand why it makes sense for countries that risk lives to participate in the contracts in Iraq. It's very simple. Our people risk their lives; coalition—friendly coalition folks risk their lives; and therefore, the contracting is going to reflect that. And that's what the U.S. taxpayers expect.

Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at at 10:51 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; President Jacques Chirac of France; Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany; President Vladimir Putin of Russia; and James A. Baker III, the President's personal envoy on Iraqi debt resolution. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in McLean, Virginia

December 11, 2003

Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for coming. Thanks for your strong support. I tell you what we're doing here: We're laying the foundation to make sure that we carry Virginia again in 2004, and we're laying the foundation for what is going to be a great nationwide victory in 2004. And I really appreciate your help. I also appropriate you letting some Oklahoma folks come today too. [*Laughter*] Yes, that's what—[*inaudible*]. Tell them hello in Tulsa.

I want you to know that I am—I'm getting ready for the campaign. I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But politics is going to come in its own time. See, I've got a job to do. I'm focusing on the people's business. I want you to remind your neighbors and your friends that this administration will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every single citizen by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I want to thank the attorney general for his kind introductory remarks. I appreciate you, General. I appreciate the fact that you're going to be the campaign chairman of the Bush-Cheney '04 campaign. I'm counting on you to energize the grassroots. And for those of you who are involved in the party like Kate Griffin, who's the party chairman, and other folks who are out in the precincts, thank you for what you are going to do.

I'm so proud that I married above myself. I'm sorry the First Lady is not here with me. Laura is a great wife, a great mother, and a great First Lady for our country. She sends her very best, and she sends her warm regards to all our friends here in northern Virginia.

Speaking about great family members, I am lucky to have a great brother who's from the great State of Virginia. He is my friend. He is—he comes to the White House; he helps remind me about what is important in life, and what is important is family. And Marvin Bush, I want to thank you for your love.

I'm also proud to be closely working with the chairman—I call him the chairman—one of the great leaders in the United States Senate, somebody who has stood strong for the State of Virginia and, more importantly, has stood strong for America by making sure we are a strong nation, and that is Senator John Warner. I know your former Governor is here with us today, my good friend Jim Gilmore. Thank you for coming, Jim. I appreciate your support.

I want to thank my friend Dwight Schar, who is the State finance chairman for Bush-Cheney '04. Thank you, Dwight, for helping make this event such a good event. I appreciate all the event chairmen for working so hard. It's been an incredibly successful day today, and I want to thank you. I know how much work goes into organizing and planning and rallying the folks to come to this type of event. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman, for being here. But most of all, thank you all.

I want you to remind your friends and neighbors that in the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. This administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Iraq and Afghanistan, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And nobody in the world today can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble, and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had some citizens who didn't tell the truth, and war came upon us in order to make us the—America more secure and the world more peaceful. And all that affected the people's confidence. But this administration acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

This administration understands that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or to invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. And that is why we are returning more money to people to help them raise their families. That is why we reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. That is why we've given small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, we have laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America, so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

And this economy of ours is strong, and it is getting stronger. The figures for the third

quarter show that our economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest rate in 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is expanding. Manufacturing activity is increasing. We've added 300,000 new jobs in the last 4 months. The tax relief plan we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform in Washington, but there wasn't much action. So I acted, and I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We've increased spending at the Federal level, particularly for Title I students, but for the first time, the Federal Government is asking whether or not our children can read and write and add and subtract. See, we believe every child can read and write and add and subtract. We expect every school in America to teach every child, so that not one single child is left behind.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Virginia's entrepreneurs and manufacturers and farmers. We passed much needed budget agreements to help maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC.

And this week, we completed the greatest advance in health care coverage for America's seniors since the founding of Medicare. The new Medicare law will give older Americans the option of prescription drug benefits and more control over their health care so they can receive the modern medical care they deserve. The new bill will provide more access to comprehensive exams and disease screenings and offer preventative care so seniors across this land can live better and healthier lives. The bill I signed creates health savings accounts so all Americans could put money away for their health care, tax-free. We confronted a big issue, and we made progress on behalf of today's seniors and tomorrow's seniors.

On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people. And the Congress gets a lot of credit. We've done a lot, working together. I appreciate my relationship with Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist and, of course, Chairman Warner and Senator Allen from this State as well. Got a great relationship with Speaker Hastert. We're working hard to try to change the tone in Washington. There's too much needless politics, endless backbiting, constant posturing. See, the best way to deal in that kind of environment—or with that environment—is to elevate the discourse and to focus on the people's business by delivering. And that's what we have done. We've delivered on behalf of all people who live in this country.

And by the way, that's the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I've put together a superb team of men and women from all walks of life to represent the United States of America. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney, although Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years—in 3 years, we've done a lot. We have come far, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate, so every single citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and to realize the great promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces, international aid workers, and innocent Iraqis. You see, they know that the advance of freedom in Iraq will be a major defeat in the cause of terror. This collection of cold-blooded killers is trying to shake the will of

the United States of America. America will never be intimidated by thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. Other nations are helping, and the reason they are is because they understand that a free Iraq will make the world more secure.

And we're standing with the Iraqi people. I was so touched when the symphony, the Iraqi Symphony, played in Kennedy Center the other night. These are brave, decent people who love freedom like we love freedom. And we're standing with them and encouraging them to assume more of their own self-defense and to take the steps necessary for self-government.

I understand and you know these are not easy tasks. But they are essential tasks. And we will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations don't attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. And I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. I also know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

This country also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering from AIDS. This great, strong, compassionate Nation is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home. Our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. This administration will stay focused on a progrowth agenda. We'll stay focused on making sure this economy continues to grow so that everyone who wants to work can find a job.

For the sake of our health care, we've got more to do. We need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, and they, therefore, affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution.

I submitted a good bill to the Congress. The House of Representatives passed that bill. Senator Warner is working hard to get the bill out of the United States Senate, but it is stuck. The Senate must act. And some Senators must understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need medical liability reform.

I have a responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. I appreciate so very much the strong support of Senator Warner and Senator Allen on this very important issue. See, some Members of the Senate are trying to keep nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the floor of the United States Senate. It is time for some Members of the Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs a comprehensive energy plan. Congress needs to complete work on the plan when you come back. You see, we need to promote energy efficiency and conservation and clean coal technology. We need to develop better technologies to explore for energy in environmentally sensitive ways. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this Nation must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping fellow citizens who are in need. There's still millions of men and women who want

to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. I look forward to working with the Congress to build on the success of welfare reform, to bring more work and dignity into lives of our fellow citizens. We should complete the "Citizen Service Act," so more Americans can serve their communities and their country. Congress should finally reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative, which will help us support the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children and caring for the homeless, offering hope to the addicted.

One of the great strengths of America is the fact that we worship the Almighty in different ways. We value religious diversity in America. We also understand that many of the problems, seemingly intractable problems in our society, can be solved by helping a soul change their heart. Our Government should never fear the influence of faith in the lives of our average citizens. We ought to encourage faith-based programs to help solve problems.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all citizens, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America that must be closed. Next week, I'm signing a bill to help people with their downpayment so they can realize the great American Dream of owning their own home. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts. We want people owning and managing their own health care plans. We want more people owning their own small business. When a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this great land.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another. They respect their religions. They respect their backgrounds. They respect their opinions. And they take responsibility for the decisions they make in life. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you're fortunate enough to be a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees.

And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself. The culture of service is strong in America. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage our fellow citizens to extend a hand to a neighbor in need, and the response has been great. People are responding in America to the needs of others. It's truly the great strength of our country. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us on a daily basis what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself. You see, once again the children of America see heroes—believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world is seeing the resolve and the courage of America. And I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. at the Hilton McLean Tysons Corner. In his remarks, he referred to Jerry W. Kilgore, Virginia State attorney general; Kate Obenshain Griffin, Virginia State chairman, Republican National Committee; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. He also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary

and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Memorandum on Imposition and Waiver of Sanctions Under Section 604 of the FY 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act

December 11, 2003

Presidential Determination No. 2004–14

Memorandum for the Secretary of State

Subject: Imposition and Waiver of Sanctions Under Section 604 of the FY 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act (Public Law 107–228)

Consistent with the authority contained in section 604 of the FY 2003 Foreign Relations Authorization Act (Public Law 107–228) (the "Act"), and with reference to the determinations set out in the report to the Congress transmitted herewith, consistent with section 603 of that Act, regarding noncompliance by the PLO and the Palestinian Authority with certain commitments, I hereby impose the sanction set out in section 604(a)(2) "Downgrade in Status of the PLO Office in the United States." This sanction is imposed for a period of 180 days from the date hereof or until such time as the next report required by section 603 of the Act is transmitted to the Congress, whichever is later.

You are authorized and directed to transmit to the appropriate congressional committees the report described in section 603 of the Act.

Furthermore, I hereby determine that it is in the national security interest of the United States to waive that sanction, pursuant to section 604 of the Act. This waiver shall be effective for a period of 180 days from the date hereof or until such time as the next report required by section 603 of the Act is transmitted to the Congress, whichever is later. You are hereby authorized and directed to transmit this determination to the Congress and to publish it in the *Federal Register*.

George W. Bush

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Alphonso Jackson To Be Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and an Exchange With Reporters

December 12, 2003

The President. Good afternoon. I am pleased to announce that I will nominate Alphonso Jackson of Dallas, Texas, to serve as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development.

Since 2001, Alphonso Jackson has given fine service as Deputy Secretary of the Department, responsible for many of the day-to-day operations of HUD. In his career, Alphonso has been a senior administrator of housing agencies in three cities, St. Louis and Washington and Dallas. He's an experienced executive in the public and private sectors, a man who knows the issues facing HUD and knows how to get things done.

I can tell you from personal experience that Alphonso is a man of great integrity and compassion. We used to live in the same neighborhood in Dallas. [*Laughter*] I used to drop by for an occasional cup of coffee, sometimes unannounced. [*Laughter*] I'm pleased that he has agreed to join my Cabinet.

I'm also grateful to former Secretary Martinez, Mel Martinez, for his outstanding leadership of HUD over the past 3 years. These have been years of important progress for the Department, for its mission, and for the families across America that benefit from its good work. Over the last 3 years, homeownership in America has reached its highest level ever, and in the last 18 months, more than a million minority citizens have become homeowners.

As leader of HUD, Mel has repaid my confidence many times over. He is a good man and a good friend, and I thank him for his service to our Nation, and I wish Mel and Kitty all the very best.

With the Senate's approval, Mel Martinez will be succeeded by another man who understands the struggles and hopes of urban America. Alphonso Jackson grew up in a family with 12 children, a housing challenge unto itself. [*Laughter*] His dad, Arthur, worked

three jobs, educated his children, and instilled the values that have carried his son far in life.

These values and experiences have also shaped the priorities Alphonso brings to his new assignment. He believes, as I do, that homeownership is a source of stability for our communities and a source of dignity for our families. He believes our Government can provide effective help to our fellow citizens who are homeless, and he has seen how entire neighborhoods can turn themselves around with strong local leadership and the help of our Federal Government. Alphonso is just the man to carry on the work of compassionate conservatism in America's cities.

Laura and I have known Alphonso and Marcia for many years. They're close friends, and I appreciate you coming, Marcia. I also want to welcome the other members of your family who are here.

Alphonso is a friend, and he's one of the most experienced and respected authorities on housing policy in America. He will be a superb Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. I want to thank you for accepting this assignment and congratulate you, my friend.

[*At this point, Deputy Secretary Jackson made brief remarks.*]

The President. I thought I would answer a couple of questions. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press].

Halliburton Operations in Iraq

Q. Yes, sir, thank you. With the Pentagon looking into the Halliburton contract, are you concerned that that gives some fuel to your critics that the contract was inappropriate in the first place?

The President. I appreciate the Pentagon looking out after the taxpayers' money. They felt like there was an overcharge issue. They put the issue right out there on the table for everybody to see, and they're doing good work. We're going to watch—we're going to make sure that as we spend the money in Iraq that it's spent well and spent wisely. And their investigation will lay the facts out for everybody to see. And if there's an overcharge, like we think there is, we expect that money to be repaid.

Randy [Randall Mikkelsen, Reuters].

Middle East Peace Process

Q. Mr. President, Secretary Powell has been meeting with unofficial Middle East peace negotiators, despite Israel's objections. And there's other signs of U.S. dissatisfaction with Israel. My question is, what does Israel need to do to convince you that it's doing its part in the peace process?

The President. Randy, you may remember I gave the speech on June 24, 2002. I laid out exactly what I think must happen in order for us to achieve peace in the Middle East, in order for the Palestinian state to emerge that is at peace with Israel. And I haven't changed my opinion. Step one is for all parties to fight off terror, to stop the few from destroying the hopes of the many. Step two is for the Palestinians to find leadership that is willing to reject the tired old policy of the past and lead the Palestinian people to not only a democratic state but a peaceful solution of differences.

Israel must be mindful that the decisions they make today will make it difficult to create—must be mindful that they don't make decisions that make it hard to create a Palestinian state. It's in Israel's interests there be a Palestinian state. It's in the poor, suffering Palestinian people's interest there be a Palestinian state. The Arab world has got responsibilities to see that this vision be implemented.

Q. But why these contacts with the unofficial negotiators?

The President. I'm sure the Secretary of State meets with all kinds of people all the time. But the policy of this administration was laid out in the Rose Garden for everybody to see, everybody to listen to.

You might remember I took that policy to Aqaba, Jordan. I stood up in front of the world and said this man has—he, Abu Mazen, came to the Oval Office and said, "I'm willing to join you, Mr. President, to help fight off terror," because he understood that terror was what was preventing progress from being made. He said, "I'm willing to work to put the institutions in place for a Palestinian state." And as we began to make progress, he got shoved aside, and that's why we're stalled where we are today.

It is time for Palestinian leadership to emerge that believes in peace and believes in the aspirations of the Palestinian people.

April [April Ryan, American Urban Radio Networks], I see you've got something that you'd like to ask. First, let me ask you a question. As you're heading into—my turn to ask you a question. [*Laughter*] So this is your first Christmas season as a mom.

Q. Second, actually, 18 months.

The President. Exactly right. [*Laughter*] Good answer. I was just trying to check and see if you knew—if you and I both knew how old your child was. [*Laughter*] Do you have a question to the President?

Halliburton Contract in Iraq

Q. Yes, I do, sir. Mr. President——

The President. Do you remember what it is? [*Laughter*]

Q. You can throw a person, you know that. [*Laughter*] Mr. President, many of your critics are saying that you should distance yourself from Halliburton, and they say it's an albatross around this administration's neck, particularly the Vice President and you. What are your thoughts about that?

The President. My thoughts are, is that I expect anybody doing business with the United States Government to be transparent and to give the taxpayers a good return on their money. That's what I expect. And if anybody is overcharging the Government, we expect them to repay that money.

Wendell [Wendell Goler, FOX News].

Iraqi Debt Relief

Q. Mr. President, in light of the New York Times editorial today, tell me why——

The President. Right. Let me stop you, Wendell. I don't read those editorials—[*laughter*]—so you're going to have to—maybe you ought to ask the question not in that context, but in another context. Sorry to interrupt you.

Q. All right, sir. Tell me why former Secretary of State Baker's ties with Carlyle Group and with Baker Botts don't pose a conflict of interest in this new task you have given him of restructuring Iraq's debt?

The President. Jim Baker is a man of high integrity. He's a man of enormous experience. And it makes sense for him to serve our country on an important mission. And that mission is to encourage countries to forgive debt so the Iraqi people can more easily grow a nation that is prosperous and peaceful.

And Jim Baker is—we're fortunate to have Jim Baker agree to serve our country. We're fortunate he decided to take time out of what is an active life but one out of the press and one that's probably not nearly as stressful as it has been when he's been involved in public service, to step forward and serve America. We're fortunate that he is willing to do that, and I thank him for that.

And I'm really happy that he has agreed to serve. His mission is to go to Paris and Berlin and Moscow and London to convince these countries to forgive debt. And I'm hopeful they do forgive debt. I'm hopeful that they're willing, in some cases, to contribute for the first time to the efforts of the Iraqi citizens. See, it's in the interest of their countries that Iraq be free and peaceful. Matter of fact, it's in the interest of all countries that Iraq be peaceful and free. It makes us all more secure. Imagine what the effect is going to have—a peaceful and free Iraq is going to have in the heart of the Middle East, where there's so much violence and hatred.

And so Jim Baker is on a noble mission. He'll do a great job. I didn't mean to dis the New York Times editorial page, but I just didn't—I'm not reading it a lot these days. [*Laughter*]

Yes, sir.

Q. Mr. President——

The President. Or anybody else's, for that matter.

Q. I have no ties with the New York Times. [*Laughter*]

The President. You didn't mean to dis it either, then. [*Laughter*]

Dollar/Euro Exchange Rate

Q. Mr. President, the dollar fell again against the euro. Mr. Snow, your Treasury Secretary, says that the decline has been orderly, boosting exports. Do you plan any intervention to stop the slide in the dollar?

The President. My answer to that question about the dollar is that this Government is for a strong dollar and that the dollar's

value ought to be set by the market and by the conditions inherent in our respective economies. And our economy is very strong and is getting stronger. But the policy, the stated policy—and not only the stated policy but the strong belief of this administration is that we have a strong dollar.

Well, listen, thank you all. Alphonso, congratulations.

Deputy Secretary Jackson. Thank you, Mr. President.

The President. I appreciate you coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:40 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority; and James A. Baker III, the President's personal envoy on Iraqi debt resolution.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

December 6

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

December 8

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had separate telephone conversations with President Umar Hasan Ahmad al-Bashir of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement Chairman Dr. John Garang to discuss the Sudan peace process.

Later in the morning, the President made a surprise drop-by visit during Mrs. Bush's interview with Larry King of CNN.

In the afternoon, the President met with Secretary of the Treasury John W. Snow, Postmaster General John E. Potter, and members of the President's Commission on the U.S. Postal Service to discuss postal reform. Later, on the State Floor, the President and Mrs. Bush hosted a Christmas reception and program for children of U.S. military personnel.

In the evening, on the State Floor, the President hosted the Congressional Ball.

December 9

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, on the South Lawn, he and Mrs. Bush participated in an arrival ceremony for Premier Wen Jiabao of China. The President and Premier Wen then met in the Oval Office. Later in the morning, in the Cabinet Room, the President and Premier Wen met with U.S. and Chinese economic officials to discuss economic and trade issues.

In the afternoon, in the Residence, the President had lunch with Premier Wen. Later, in Room 450 at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building, he dropped by a meeting between National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice and the U.S.-Sub-Saharan Africa Trade and Economic Cooperation Forum to discuss the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

In the evening, at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the President and Mrs. Bush attended a joint performance by the National Symphony Orchestra and the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra.

The President announced his intention to nominate Lisa Marie Kruska to be Assistant Secretary of Labor for Public Affairs.

The President announced his intention to nominate Donald Lee Korb to be Chief Counsel for the Internal Revenue Service and Assistant General Counsel in the Department of the Treasury.

The President announced his intention to nominate Robert Scott Jepson, Jr., Paul Byron Jones, and Charles Leon Kolby to be members of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Robert A. Martinez as a member of the Board of Governors of the United Service Organizations, Inc.

The President declared a major disaster in the U.S. Virgin Islands and ordered Federal aid to supplement Territory recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms, flooding,

landslides, and mudslides on November 10–16.

The President declared a major disaster in Virginia and ordered Federal aid to supplement Commonwealth and local recovery efforts in the area struck by severe storms and flooding on November 18–19.

December 10

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing followed by a National Security Council meeting. Later, he met with Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld.

During the day, the President had separate telephone conversations with President Vladimir Putin of Russia, President Jacques Chirac of France, and Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany to discuss his appointment of James A. Baker III as his personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt.

December 11

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. He also had separate telephone conversations with outgoing Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada, to congratulate him on his service to the Canadian people, and with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi of Italy, to discuss the situation in Iraq and the President's appointment of James A. Baker III as his personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to McLean, VA.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

In the evening, the President attended a holiday dinner.

The President announced his designation of Kirk Van Tine as Acting Deputy Secretary of Transportation.

The President announced his designation of Neil McPhie as Vice Chairman of the Merit Systems Protection Board.

December 12

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing and then met with Secretary of State Colin L. Powell. Later, he dropped by a White House meeting between Secretary of the Interior Gale A. Norton, Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman, Council on Environmental Quality Chairman James L. Connaughton, and wildlife conservation leaders.

In the afternoon, the President greeted winners of the 2003 MATHCOUNTS National Competition. Later, he attended holiday receptions.

In the evening, the President attended a holiday reception for members of the U.S. Secret Service. Later, he traveled to Camp David, MD.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

The following list does not include promotions of members of the Uniformed Services, nominations to the Service Academies, or nominations of Foreign Service officers.

Submitted December 9

Samuel W. Bodman,
of Massachusetts, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, vice Kenneth W. Dam, resigned.

LaFayette Collins,
of Texas, to be U.S. Marshal for the Western District of Texas for the term of 4 years, vice Jack O. Dean.

Peter W. Hall,
of Vermont, to be U.S. Circuit Judge for the Second Circuit, vice Fred I. Parker, deceased.

Robert Jepson,
of Georgia, to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term expiring September 14, 2008, vice Karen Hastie Williams, term expired.

Paul Jones,
of Colorado, to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board for a term expiring September 14, 2008, vice Charles L. Kolbe, term expired.

Rhonda Keenum,
of Mississippi, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Director General of the

United States and Foreign Commercial Service, vice Maria Cino, resigned.

Charles L. Kolbe,
of Iowa, to be a member of the Internal Revenue Service Oversight Board for the remainder of the term expiring September 14, 2004, vice Steve H. Nickles, resigned.

Donald Korb,
of Ohio, to be Chief Counsel for the Internal Revenue Service and an Assistant General Counsel in the Department of the Treasury, vice B. John Williams, Jr.

Lisa Kruska,
of Virginia, to be an Assistant Secretary of Labor, vice Kathleen M. Harrington.

James L. Robart,
of Washington, to be U.S. District Judge for the Western District of Washington, vice Thomas S. Zilly, retiring.

Brian Carlton Roseboro,
of New Jersey, to be an Under Secretary of the Treasury, vice Peter R. Fisher, resigned.

Ronald J. Tenpas,
of Illinois, to be U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois for the term of 4 years, vice Miriam F. Miquelon, resigned.

Withdrawn December 9

Susan C. Schwab,
of Maryland, to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury, vice Kenneth W. Dam, resigned, which was sent to the Senate on July 17, 2003.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released December 6

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 421, H.R. 1367, H.R. 1821, H.R. 3038, H.R. 3140, H.R. 3166, H.R. 3185, H.R. 3349, S. 579, S. 1152, S. 1156, S. 1768, and S. 1895

Released December 8

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1

Fact sheet: President Bush Signs the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003

Fact sheet: Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba

Released December 9

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 3348

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to Virginia

Statement by the Press Secretary on disaster assistance to the U.S. Virgin Islands

Released December 10

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released December 11

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Released December 12

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1828 and H.R. 2115

Acts Approved by the President

Approved December 6

H.R. 421 / Public Law 108–160
Environmental Policy and Conflict Resolution Advancement Act of 2003

H.R. 1367 / Public Law 108–161
National Veterinary Medical Service Act

H.R. 1821 / Public Law 108–162
To award a congressional gold medal to Dr. Dorothy Height in recognition of her many contributions to the Nation

H.R. 3038 / Public Law 108–163
Health Care Safety Net Amendments Technical Corrections Act of 2003

H.R. 3140 / Public Law 108–164
Fairness to Contact Lens Consumers Act

H.R. 3166 / Public Law 108–165
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 57 Old Tappan Road in Tappan, New York, as the "John G. Dow Post Office Building"

H.R. 3185 / Public Law 108–166
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 38 Spring Street in Nashua, New Hampshire, as the "Hugh Gregg Post Office Building"

H.R. 3349 / Public Law 108–167
To authorize salary adjustments for Justices and judges of the United States for fiscal year 2004

S. 579 / Public Law 108–168
National Transportation Safety Board Reauthorization Act of 2003

S. 1152 / Public Law 108–169
To reauthorize the United States Fire Administration, and for other purposes

S. 1156 / Public Law 108–170
Veterans Health Care, Capital Asset, and Business Improvement Act of 2003

S. 1768 / Public Law 108–171
National Flood Insurance Program Reauthorization Act of 2004

S. 1895 / Public Law 108–172
To temporarily extend the programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 through March 15, 2004, and for other purposes

Approved December 8

H.R. 1 / Public Law 108–173
Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003

Approved December 9

H.R. 3348 / Public Law 108–174
To reauthorize the ban on undetectable firearms

Approved December 12

H.R. 1828 / Public Law 108–175
Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act of 2003

H.R. 2115 / Public Law 108–176
Vision 100-Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act

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Transfer of Funds Appropriated to the President Under the Heading Operating Expenses of the Coalition Provisional Authority, and Delegation of the Functions of the President Under the Heading Iraq Relief and Reconstruction Fund, in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004, memorandum—1766

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